

Sports

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Softball: Union's journey to Columbus begins Tuesday at Lovett

Lady Panthers place third in region tourney with loss to East Hall, victory over Lumpkin

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Gainesville - A walk-off squeeze bunt by Braden Poteete gave Union County a 1-0, extra-inning victory over Lumpkin County in the Consolation Game of last week's Region 7-AAA Tournament at North Hall High School.

By finishing third in 7-AAA, the Lady Panthers have earned a date with the No. 2 seed from Region 5-AAA, the Lovett Lady Lions.

Westminster and Lovett placed No. 1 and No. 2, respectively in a competitive Region 5-AAA, with Pace Academy and Cedar Grove rounding out the top four.

Union missed out on an opportunity to play for a region title and host the first round of state when they fell 6-1 to East Hall in the first of two games on Wednesday.

Entering the seventh and final inning, the Lady Panthers trailed 2-1 but East Hall exploded for four runs in the top half of the inning.

Lady Viking slugger Stefanie Redmon gave Laken Chambers and Union Head Coach Jessica Stewart fits.

With two outs and a runner on, Redmon doubled to right field to spot her team a quick 1-0 advantage in the top



Junior Braden Poteete with her game-winning squeeze bunt vs Lumpkin County. She would drive in Union's only run in both region tournament games last Wednesday. Photo/Todd Forrest

of the first.

In the fourth, she jacked a solo homer over the left field fence to make it a 2-0 game.

Union County remained hitless into the fifth inning when Braden Poteete broke through with an RBI single - scoring Ellie Garrison, who was hit by a pitch and advanced to second on a sacrifice from Maddie Sutton.

The Lady Panthers saw three different hitters reach base in the first, but a force out and a pair of strikeouts ended the threat.

The four-run, seventh inning began with a hit-by-pitch and a single, sandwiched around an out. Another hit batter loaded the bases, setting the table for consecutive base hits to left that opened up a 5-1 East Hall

advantage.

The Lady Vikings would tack on one more run following a walk, another hit batter and a pair of grounders. Union would catch a break on the second ground ball when it clipped the foot of an East Hall base runner resulting in an automatic out.

Chambers went the distance for Union County, striking out four, but very uncharacteristically, she struggled with her control. She allowed seven hits, issued two walks and hit four batters.

Poteete's RBI single would be Union's only hit of the game. Jillian Lawn drew a first inning walk and Garrison took one for the team when she was plunked and scored on Poteete's base hit.

The Lady Vikings continued their red-hot ways and blasted No. 1 seed North Hall 8-0 in the 7-AA title game, later that day.

Chambers would get the start from the circle in the second game but two hit batters and an error loaded the bases for Lumpkin County in the top of the first.

That would be all for Chambers as Coach Stewart turned to Lawn, and the junior escaped trouble with a strikeout and a tapper back to the circle.

Chambers reached on a



Junior Jillian Lawn saved one of her best pitching performances for when it mattered most - October. Photo/Todd Forrest

one-out walk in the first and Mary Wischmeyer singled up-the-middle during the second but neither advanced past second base.

With Lawn settling into a groove from the circle, Chambers drew a leadoff walk in the bottom of the fourth, but she would be Union's final baserunner until extra innings when each team begins with a player standing on second.

The Lady Indians only scoring threat came in the fourth when a leadoff single and stolen base put a runner on second with nobody out.

And once again, Lawn got out of the inning with a strikeout and two balls back to the pitcher to end the inning.

In the eighth, Lumpkin opened with a runner on second but she was quickly tagged out at third when she came off the bag and the tag was applied.

The Lady Indians chose to bunt to open the inning and Lawn fired late to third base, luckily, the runner was unable to hold the bag and the out completely demoralized Lumpkin, who popped out and grounded out to end their half of the inning.

Lawn went 7.2 innings without giving up a walk. She

also fanned five Lady Indians while surrendering only two hits.

Wischmeyer and Aladriel Arnold were responsible for the only two Union County hits.

Chambers walked and Poteete, for the second consecutive game, drove in the only Lady Panther run of the contest.

Union and Lovett will get underway on Tuesday at 3 and 5 p.m. with the "if necessary" game taking place on Wednesday at 3 p.m.

This year's senior class already has one postseason trip to Lovett on their resumes when they fell to the Lady Lions in three games during the first round of the 2013 Class AA State Tournament.

However, the Lady Panthers will be seeking redemption from three years ago. During that 2013 series, Union run-ruled Lovett in two games, only to drop the next two games, and the series.

That first round exit at Lovett is the only time Chambers, Kendra Tanner, and Lydia Arrowood didn't reach the Sweet 16, and they will be determined to not allow it to happen again.



Union celebrates the win as Asst. Coach Kaitlyn Seabolt looks on. As a player, Seabolt played a vital role in many UC postseason wins, earning her the nicknames of "Ms. October" and "Red October." Photo/Todd Forrest

Panthers unable to keep pace with explosive Dawson County offense

"Pink Out" game for Breast Cancer Awareness this Friday as Union hosts North Hall in pivotal region battle

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Dawsonville - The Panthers fell to 5-2 overall and 1-2 in region play following a 57-26 loss at defending Region 7-AAA Champion Dawson County on a rainy Friday night in Dawsonville.

The Tigers, who played turnover-free football, converted three Union County interceptions into touchdowns, including a back-breaking pick-six to open up a 57-19 lead, late in the third quarter. Dawson also returned a kickoff for a score to pull away 43-19 following a Bo Lynch scoring run that cut the deficit to 17 points.

"The kickoff return really hurt but we had already dug ourselves a pretty big hole at that point," Panthers Head Coach Brian Allison said. "We also had 22 missed tackles as a team so, as the head coach, I'm not putting our kids in position to make tackles."

After the Tigers struck for a pair of first quarter touchdowns, Cole Wright responded with a 38-yard scoring run to cut the Dawson lead in half at 14-7 with 11:31 left before halftime. Wright's touchdown was set up by a 30-yard completion to Lynch, down the sideline.

"This loss can't be put on our offense, they scored 26 points," Allison said. "The turnovers, they obviously didn't help, but I thought Cole Wright still played a really good ball game. He played his heart out. We had several kids that played their hearts out. We just made mistakes that you can't make to win ball games."

However, the Tigers turned their second interception of the half into a 6-yard touchdown run with 5:49 remaining in the second quarter. Union continued to have issues stopping the 2-point conversion



Bo Lynch (5) and Cole Wright (8) each scored a pair of touchdowns at Dawson County and both are on the verge of reaching 25 total touchdowns for their careers on Friday night. Photo/Todd Forrest

as Dawson successfully tackled on two more to make it a 22-7 game.

A holding penalty put the Panthers in a 1st-and-22 on the ensuing possession where a 10-yard completion to RJ Banton and a 10-yard scramble by Wright weren't enough to move the chains.

The Tigers would take over at their 41 following the Union punt and facing a 3rd-and-10, connected on a 20-yard pass play. On the very next play, Dawson was back in the endzone after a 39-yard run.

"We've got to do a better job of getting our defense off the field," Allison said. "We give up to many big plays, but the main thing is: we just need to tackle better."

Union made it a two-possession game early in the third quarter when a facemask penalty aided the drive. With a 3rd-and-goal from the two, Wright split two pass rushers

and escaped the pressure for his second rushing touchdown of the game. Unfortunately, the extra point was unsuccessful and the Panthers trailed 29-13.

Dawson used another big play to keep some distance between themselves and the visitors as a 44-yard score on a quarterback draw made it a 36-13 game.

Lynch would punch it in from two yards out but another missed point after attempt kept Union County in a three-possession game - trailing by 17 at 36-19.

Wright kept the drive alive with a third down completion for 12 yards before moving the chains again with a short gain on 3rd-and-2. Later, Hemphill went up high to reel in a pass from Wright for eight on 3rd-and-6, then Wright kept it himself for a pick up of 37 to move Union inside the five and set up Lynch's first score



The Union County defense swarms a Dawson County running back during the first half of last Friday's game. Following the North Hall game, Union gets its much-needed bye week. The Panthers defense could be playing shorthanded due to injuries this week as they try and circle the wagons vs North Hall and avoid falling to 1-3 in Region 7-AAA play. Photo/Todd Forrest

of the night.

This time around, it was the special teams that gave up a big play as Dawson returned the ensuing kickoff 60 yards for the score. The Tigers would add another touchdown run to make it 50-19 before the interception return added insult to injury.

"We didn't make enough plays and we ran into a team that has 36 seniors, so they were probably a little better than us," Allison said. "They're pretty darn good up front and they'll be able to compete with GAC."

The only score of the fourth quarter came on a 1-yard run by Lynch with just over two minutes to play. The point-after by Smith was good to bring the final score to 57-26. With

a running clock in the fourth, Union was able to keep Dawson's offense off the field with a 16-play, 74-yard drive that saw Lynch catch his second pass of the game for a gain of 14. Two plays later, Wright scrambled for 16 to move the Panthers inside the redzone.

Lynch finished the game with 62 yards on the ground to go with two scores. He also hauled in two passes for a team-high 44 yards. Wright completed 17-of-29 for 156 yards and three picks. On the ground he ran for 160 yards and a pair of touchdowns on 16 carries.

Logan Dyer grabbed a team-high five catches for 34 yards, Sean Dobbins caught four balls for 27 yards, with

Hemphill and Banton catching two passes each.

Injury report: Defensive starters Banton and Zach Stone, along with starting wideout Erik Strayer are all doubtful for Friday.

Entering the Dawson County game, Strayer lead the team with 16 catches and 218 yards.

Banton is first in tackles, tackles for loss, second in sacks, and he is the punter.

Stone will be missed in all phases of the game. He is sixth on the team in tackles, third in all-purpose yards, and has blocked an extra point and a punt.

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